

# City of Columbus COVID-19 Safe Work Practice Guidance

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## Purpose

The purpose of this Safe Work Practice is to:

- ⌚ Reduce the likelihood that all employees, visitors and volunteers will become infected by those with a contagious airborne or droplet-transmitted disease.
- ⌚ Increase the City of Columbus's ability to continue its core missions and return to normal operations in a timely manner.
- ⌚ Minimize the disruption and impact on employee's lives that occur with pandemics, epidemics, and other respiratory illness outbreaks.

## Objective

The objective of this guideline is reducing the spread of infection by implementing safe work practices that will help reduce transmission by decreasing contact between sick and uninfected persons in accordance with PO23-1 *Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Workplace Policy* distributed by the Mayor's Office on March 12, 2020 and the most recent version of the Department of Human Resources Q&As.

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**Please note** – this is a quickly-evolving pandemic and recommendations in work practices are subject to change quickly if recommendations from Centers for Disease Control, Ohio Department of Health, Columbus Public Health, Citywide Occupational Safety and Health Program, or your Department/Division change.

Because of the nature of any respiratory illnesses, the object is to focus on educating and protecting employees as well as curtailing the spread of the disease. Employee protection and service delivery can be achieved through a combination of infection control methods and the use of personal preventive measures and equipment.

This document is a best management practice designed to supplement, NOT REPLACE, any Department/Division policies, procedures, or guidance.

## Daily Health Monitoring and Face Coverings

### **Required daily self-monitoring (at home)**

This applies to all City of Columbus employees who will be reporting to work. Prior to coming to work each day, employees must self-evaluate for the below symptoms.

**If you have the symptoms below, do not report to work.** Call your supervisor and your health care provider. Supervisors should contact their Department/Division Human Resources Officer/Manager. If you do not have a health care provider, call your local health department. Columbus Public Health COVID-19 hotline is 614-645-1519.

### ***Any of the following symptoms:***

- **Fever** (Fever is  $\geq 100.4^{\circ}\text{F}$ )
- **Cough**
- **Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing**
- **Chills**
- **Muscle pain**
- **Sore throat**
- **New loss of taste or smell**

### **Department/Division health screenings and required face coverings**

**Employees must don a face covering prior to entering the work site, building, or work area.** Please see the Safe Work Practices chart below for more information.

Upon arrival to work, the Department must screen employees with the below questions. This screening process may occur in a variety of ways; however, the employee cannot begin work until the health assessment is completed. For privacy purposes, documentation of the screening process should not include whether or not an employee passed or failed the test, just whether the employee was screened with the below questions. Further guidance regarding how this is accomplished is forthcoming. The health assessment no longer includes taking temperatures of employees at the work site.

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## Questions:

- When you took your temperature at home prior to coming to work, did you have a fever?
  - Fever is  $\geq 100.4^{\circ}\text{F}$
- Are you experiencing shortness of breath, difficulty breathing or have you developed a cough?
- Are you experiencing any of the following symptoms: chills, muscle aches, sore throat, or new loss of taste or smell?
- Is anyone in your immediate household currently being tested for COVID-19 or considered a presumed positive by a health care provider?

If the employee answers **“Yes”** to any of the questions above they should be sent home immediately. The employee’s supervisor should contact your Department/Division Human Resources representative to notify them of any employees sent home or needing to remain at home due to responding yes to these questions. Employee should not return to work until a COVID-19 negative test result is provided or their health care provider gives guidance that they or those in their immediate household are not suspected of having COVID-19.

If an employee has a confirmed positive test for COVID-19: Initiate the COVID-19 Flow Chart. Refer to the applicable flow chart to screen employees – there is a separate flow chart for sworn (Police and Fire) and non-sworn employees.

## Visitors

While not required to wear face coverings, guests and visitors may be offered face coverings upon entering buildings or work areas. This may be especially important in work areas where members of the public will be in the work space for an extended period of time, an example of which would be Civil Service testing. In these instances, the Department may also want to establish a health screening protocol similar to the questions listed for employees in this guidance.

## City of Columbus Safe Work Practices

Control Method	Safe Work Practices
Time	Eliminate in-person or face to face meetings and utilize virtual options whenever possible. Avoid crowded settings.

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<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Distance</b> (Initiate Social Distancing Behaviors)</p>	<p>Ensure minimum 6 feet between people. If not possible, install barriers. Increasing the distance significantly reduces the likelihood of exposure.</p> <p>Establish maximum capacity of all work areas (e.g., 50% of fire code)</p> <p>Redesign lunch and break areas to allow for 6 feet distancing between people.</p> <p>Limit personal face to face interactions.</p> <p>Avoid gatherings of more than 10 people.</p> <p>If necessary choose a large room for meetings and sit at least 6 feet away from each other.</p> <p>Apply department approved staggered work shifts and lunch times.</p> <p>Change shift times and practice wherever possible, with employees going off duty leaving the workplace before the new shift enters.</p> <p>Draft flexible work schedules and telecommuting arrangements to reduce contact and allow for social distancing.</p> <p>Use pick-up or delivery systems where clients and customers can pick up or deliver without face to face contact. And/or request information via telephone/email/fax.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Shielding</b></p>	<p>If repeated contact with people who are ill is unavoidable, take precautionary measures (examples include, using a teller window, physical barrier which maintains a distance of 6 feet, other person dons surgical mask to prevent droplet).</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Hygiene Practices</b></p>	<p>Frequently disinfect potential contaminated work surfaces, and other regularly touched surfaces (e.g., door knobs). Disinfect shared work surfaces between uses and other frequently touched surfaces at least between shifts, at a minimum.</p> <p>Wash hands frequently with soap and water or alcohol based hand cleaners, especially after coughing or sneezing and before smoking or eating. Avoid touching your face/ mouth/nose/eyes.</p> <p>Hand sanitizer: Should be at least 60% or greater alcohol content.</p> <p>Use cough and sneeze etiquette: cough and sneeze into your inner elbow or arm to reduce droplets. If you contaminate your hands with a cough or sneeze, immediately wash your hands with soap and water or use sanitizer if hand washing is not available.</p> <p>Reduce sharing work surfaces, telephones, computers, etc. Avoid hand shaking.</p> <p>As a recommended best practice, maintain 3 weeks of cleaning supplies.</p> <p>If an employee becomes symptomatic while at work, isolate or remove the employee immediately and contact the department human resources officer. Keep employees away from the ill employee's work area until a deep cleaning can be performed.</p>

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<p>Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) and Face Coverings</p>	<p><b><u>Except when an exception applies, a face covering is required at all times when working</u></b> and should be donned prior to entering your work building or work space. A face covering can be a cloth face covering or a surgical mask and its purpose is to reduce exhaled droplets in crowded settings when controls like physical distancing cannot be maintained. Face coverings play an important role in preventing the spread of COVID-19.</p> <p>If a Department will allow a face covering exception for a particular task, <u>the Department must provide written justification</u> (instructions attached to this guidance) upon request, explaining why an employee is not required to wear a facial covering in the workplace</p> <p>Face covering exceptions (including possible City of Columbus examples) are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An employee in a particular position is prohibited by a law or regulation from wearing a face covering while on the job</li> <li>• A face covering is not advisable for health purposes</li> <li>• Wearing a face covering on the job is against documented industry best practice</li> <li>• Wearing a face covering violates a company's safety policies</li> <li>• There is a practical reason a face covering cannot be worn             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Some law enforcement duties where clear lines of communication with the public would be hindered and would present a safety risk.</li> <li>○ Employees working in the heat or other instances where the mask presents an additional health risk (where distancing or other control measures can be implemented) and where the mask would become soaked with sweat.</li> <li>○ Employees are already wearing a respirator for job task</li> <li>○ Employees working in call centers or other duties where they are constantly on the phone - as long as each person is minimum 6' distanced and there are barriers around 3 sides of the person. Employee must don face covering as soon as they leave desk/work station to travel throughout the work area.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• An employee is sitting alone in an enclosed work-space.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Employees working in offices, working alone in vehicles, working alone operating in the cab of equipment, lawn mowing. Face covering must be donned as soon as the employee exits their office, work space, or exits their vehicle or piece of equipment.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Please see the end of this guidance document for more information regarding cloth face coverings, their limitations, how to clean them, and tips for making cloth face coverings. Employees can bring in and wear their own cloth face coverings but they must not contain any inappropriate, offensive, or political pictures or language.</p> <p>Please refer to your Department/Division safety professional and the PPE Assessment Guidelines for Respiratory Exposure to COVID-19 for City of Columbus Non-Sworn Employees for any additional guidance regarding PPE. Department/Division safety professionals can contact Citywide Occupational Safety and Health for further guidance.</p> <p>Nitrile gloves should be worn when disinfecting surfaces. As always, practice universal precautions and good hand hygiene.</p>
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<p>Reporting Guidelines</p>	<p>Stay home when you are sick. Do not report to work if experiencing a fever, respiratory illness, or flu like symptoms. Please see above for monitoring guidance.</p> <p>If an employee becomes symptomatic while at work, isolate or remove the employee immediately and contact your department/division human resources officer.</p> <p>Refer to PO23-1 <i>Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Workplace Policy</i> distributed by the Mayor's Office on March 12, 2020 and the Department of Human Resources Q&amp;As.</p>
<p>Additional Guidance for Field Employees</p>	<p>Whenever possible, limit or eliminate City business inside anyone's home or business.</p> <p>Any City business that will occur within someone's home or business should first be triaged by phone to determine:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If the site visit is necessary.</li> <li>• If anyone in the home is experiencing any symptoms of illness (fever, or other flu-like symptoms) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ If they answer no to illness symptoms, let the citizen know that the City of Columbus employee will ask those questions again upon arrival and if anyone in the home is experiencing those symptoms the need for the home visit will be re-evaluated.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>If a City employee must perform an in-home or business visit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Upon arrival and before entering the home or business, don your face covering or, if applicable, additional respiratory protection – ask again if anyone in the home is experiencing any symptoms of illness. If they are – reach out to your supervisor to determine if the visit will move forward.</li> <li>• If you continue with the visit – let the homeowner or client know that as a precautionary measure you will be asking them to maintain a 6' distance</li> <li>• Hand Hygiene: Hand sanitizer or hand wipes should be used prior to entering the home or business. Gloves are also recommended, particularly if you will be touching anything in the home or business. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ As much as possible, do not touch anything.</li> <li>○ Do not touch your face, mouth, nose, or eyes while in the home or business.</li> <li>○ Do not shake hands with the resident or client and do not share pens or other equipment.</li> <li>○ Remove gloves upon exiting in a manner that does not contaminate the hands.</li> <li>○ Perform hand hygiene with hand sanitizer or wipes upon exiting. Wash hands with soap and water as soon as possible.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• If an in-home or in-business inspection MUST be conducted at a location of someone who is exhibiting flu-like symptoms or other similar symptoms of illness additional personal protective equipment will be required, PLEASE SEEK THE GUIDANCE FROM YOUR DEPARTMENT/DIVISION SAFETY PROFESSIONAL PRIOR TO CONDUCTING THE IN-HOME OR IN-BUSINESS VISIT: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Citywide Occupational Safety and Health is available for guidance in determining appropriate measures, if requested.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

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## Additional Guidelines for Return to Work

- Be resourceful and innovative in finding solutions to continue to perform City functions while creating and maintaining a safe work environment. Consider these guidelines to determine what works best for your workplace.
  - Examine each task that is performed by City employees and determine how the task can be performed using distancing, technology, barriers, or other means to prevent or limit employees from being within 6 feet of another employee or member of the public.
  - Stagger work shifts, allow flexible work hours, and continue to allow telework, when possible, to decrease the amount of people working in the same work space at the same time.
  - Move work stations, wherever possible, to increase distance between people.
  - Create drop off availability for documents when electronic submittal is not possible.
  - Consider installing physical barriers, such as clear plastic sneeze guards, in areas where social distancing is not possible.
- Continue to work to source hard to find protective equipment if it is needed by your employees. It is a good idea to keep an inventory of these items and try to track usage so you know what you will need moving forward.
- Consider limiting entrances into buildings to one entrance and posting signage that directs visitors NOT to enter if they are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms. Consider posting these signs in multiple languages, where needed.
- Be aware that some employees may be at higher risk for serious illness, such as older adults and those with chronic medical conditions. Consider minimizing face-to-face contact between these employees or assign work tasks that allow them to maintain a distance of six feet from other workers, customers and visitors, or to telework if possible.
- Signage on COVID-19 related health and safety guidelines are required in common areas. Examples can be found on the CDC website.
- Conference rooms should have a reduced maximum capacity. To allow for 6 feet distancing, we recommend the following:
  - Ensure 6' distancing between each person/seat.
  - Remove all additional seating in the conference room.
  - Post room configuration and notice not to adjust seating (this can be as simple as a hand drawn diagram).
  - Post the new maximum capacity outside of the conference room.
- Consider cross-training employees to perform essential functions so the workplace can operate even if key employees are absent.
- Discourage workers from using other workers' phones, desks, offices, or other work tools and equipment, when possible
- Consider improving the engineering controls using the building ventilation system. This may include some or all of the following activities:
  - Increase ventilation rates in the work environment.
  - Increase the percentage of outdoor air that circulates into the system
- Establish a cleaning schedule in your work station/area if you don't already have one. Work areas should be cleaned/sanitized often with EPA approved sanitizer that kills COVID-19. Pay particular attention to high-touch surface areas. Shared work surfaces should be cleaned/sanitized between uses.
- Limit employee travel
- Except when exempted, a face covering is required at all times when working and should be donned prior to entering your work building or work space. A face covering can be a cloth face covering or a surgical mask and its purpose is to reduce exhaled droplets in crowded settings when controls like physical distancing cannot be maintained. Face coverings play an important role in preventing the spread of COVID-19.

If a Department will allow a face covering exception for a particular task, the Department must provide written justification (instructions attached to this guidance) upon request,

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	explaining why an employee is not required to wear a facial covering in the workplace. Please see the exceptions in the PPE section above for more information.
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## Face Covering Exception Justification Form

If employees within your work place will not be wearing face coverings while working, you must complete a written justification for the exception. Please complete the form below and provide written justification explaining why an employee or employee group is not required to wear a facial covering in the workplace. Complete for **EACH TASK**. Please note: if an employee is exempted from wearing a face covering for health purposes additional measures must be taken to protect the employees working around that exempted employee. A potential alternative would be a plastic face shield. If there are no alternatives for the employee, contact your Department/Division Human Resources.

Reminder: employees who are exempted from wearing face coverings for a particular task or function must don their face mask as soon as they complete that function/task.

- Each exception must be approved by the Department/Division safety professional
- A copy of each exception must be sent to the department/division human resources office AND Citywide Occupational Safety and Health Program ([jnmorgan@columbus.gov](mailto:jnmorgan@columbus.gov))

Department		Division	
Work Group/Area		Date of assessment	
Location of Work Group			
Task or employee name to be exempted			
Reason for exception: CHECK BOX(ES) that apply		Description of task and why it meets criteria for exception	
<input type="checkbox"/>	An employee in a particular position is prohibited by a law or regulation from wearing a face covering while on the job		
<input type="checkbox"/>	A face covering is not advisable for health purposes		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Wearing a face covering on the job is against documented industry best practice		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Wearing a face covering violates a company's safety policies		
<input type="checkbox"/>	There is a practical reason a face covering cannot be worn		
<input type="checkbox"/>	An employee is sitting alone in an enclosed work-space		
Approved by:			
Title:			
Date of approval:			

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## Use of Cloth Face Coverings to Help Slow the Spread of COVID-19

CDC continues to study the spread and effects of the novel coronavirus across the United States. We now know from recent studies that a significant portion of individuals with coronavirus lack symptoms (“asymptomatic”) and that even those who eventually develop symptoms (“pre-symptomatic”) can transmit the virus to others before showing symptoms. This means that the virus can spread between people interacting in close proximity—for example, speaking, coughing, or sneezing—even if those people are not exhibiting symptoms. In light of this new evidence, CDC recommends wearing cloth face coverings in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain.

Except when an approved exception applies, a face covering is required at all times when working and should be donned prior to entering your work building or work space. Along with wearing a face covering, it is critical to emphasize that maintaining 6-feet social distancing remains important to slowing the spread of the virus. A face covering can be a cloth face covering or a surgical mask and its purpose is to reduce exhaled droplets in crowded settings when controls like physical distancing cannot be maintained. Face coverings play an important role in preventing the spread of COVID-19. A layered approach to preventing exposures to coronavirus, including face coverings combined with social distancing, barriers, proper hand hygiene, and other prevention measures, provides the best protection from COVID-19.

Required face coverings can be a cloth face covering, discussed here in this additional guidance sheet, or a surgical mask.

Cloth face coverings fashioned from household items or made at home from common materials at low cost can be used.

Cloth face coverings are not surgical masks or N-95 respirators. ***City of Columbus employees performing clinical tasks, field inspections inside of residential or commercial locations, or other tasks that put them within 6’ of others will likely have additional guidance – please refer to your Department/Division safety professional for that information.***

### How to Wear a Cloth Face Covering



*DO NOT place cloth face coverings on children under age 2, anyone who has trouble breathing, or is unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance.*

Cloth face coverings should—

- Fit snugly but comfortably against the side of the face
- Be secured with ties or ear loops
- Include multiple layers of fabric
- Allow for breathing without restriction
- Be able to be laundered and dried without damage or change to shape

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## DIY Face Coverings

- Employees can bring in and wear their own cloth face coverings but they must not contain any inappropriate, offensive, or political pictures or language.
- Use tightly woven fabric (preferably cloth that lets minimal light shine through) such as quilting cloth.
- If you need to buy materials, consider purchasing online to avoid public places.
- The CDC offers instructions on creating a no-sew face covering out of a T-shirt; or out of a bandanna, coffee filter, and rubber bands. You will also need scissors.

## Can cloth face coverings be reused?

- Yes. Cloth face coverings can be re-used until they are no longer in good condition (i.e., loss of elasticity, degraded, material wearing thin or holes/cuts in material, heavily soiled and cannot be cleaned)

## Should cloth face coverings be washed or otherwise cleaned regularly? How regularly?

- Yes. They should be washed daily using hot water.

## How does one safely sterilize/clean a cloth face covering?

- A washing machine should suffice in properly washing a face covering.

## How does one safely remove a used cloth face covering?

- Individuals should be careful not to touch their eyes, nose, and mouth when removing their face covering and wash hands or use hand sanitizer immediately after removing.

For more information on DIY face coverings please visit the CDC website for more guidance:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html>

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## Guidance for Limited Reuse of N95 Respirators and Surgical Facemasks

NOTE: This guidance is NOT designed for the use of cloth face coverings for general public health (please see above). This guidance is for City of Columbus employees who wear a respirator or surgical face mask for occupational exposure prevention.

This following is based on guidance from the CDC for healthcare workers regarding the reuse of N-95 respirators and facemasks. For guidance regarding extended use for respirators please refer to the Centers for Disease Control website. Reuse is permitted provided that the respiratory protection is free of contamination, still maintains its fit and function, and for reuse, can be stored appropriately to prevent contamination and damage in between uses.

Always perform hand hygiene before and after touching, adjusting, donning, or doffing the respiratory protection. Regardless of extended use or reuse N-95 respirators and facemasks must only be used by a single wearer.

### **Basic practices when considering re-use of disposable respirators or surgical face masks:**

- Minimize the number of individuals who need to use respiratory protection by using engineering and administrative controls where possible;
- Use alternatives to N95 respirators that can be cleaned and re-used (e.g., other classes of filtering facepiece respirators, elastomeric half-mask and full facepiece air purifying respirators, powered air purifying respirators) where feasible;
- Ensure all employees who may re-use N95 respirators or surgical masks receive proper training.

### **Reuse Recommendations for N95 respirator or surgical face mask**

- Limit potential surface contamination. Minimize unnecessary contact with the respirator surface, particularly the inside of the respirator or facemask.
- Discard if gross contamination occurs (i.e., sneezed on, coughed on, other gross contamination).
- Perform hand hygiene with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer before and after touching or adjusting the respirator or mask (if necessary for comfort or to maintain fit).
- Hang used respirators and masks in a designated storage area or keep them in a clean, Ziploc container (kept open for air) between uses. To minimize potential cross-contamination, store so that they do not touch each other and the person using the respirator or face mask is clearly identified. Storage containers should be disposed of or cleaned regularly.
- Ensure the respirator or surgical mask is sitting comfortably on your face with a good seal.
- Discard any respirator or mask that is obviously damaged or becomes hard to breathe through.
- Respirators and facemasks must only be used by a single wearer.
- Do not attempt to self-sanitize your N95 respirator or face mask. Doing so could degrade the respirator or surgical mask or cause injury.